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GERTRUDE MANNERING
A TALE OF SACRIFICE

BY FRANCES NOBLE
CHAPTER XIV.—CONTINUED

"Well, I must try, Gertry, mustn't I?" And he stroked her bright, dark hair as she sat there close beside him. Of course you must go, love; I have been thinking they ought to invite you to Nethercotes. I should like you to see it, for it is a beautiful place. I was there once for a week with your mother, shortly before you were born, Gertry—soon after Sir Robert had brought home your cousin a bride, and—and I have never been since."

Gertry came closer and kissed away the sigh that escaped her father's lips at the recollection he had conjured up. Had she ever loved him sufficiently, this dear, kind father? Was she worthy of his untiring devotion now, when she was hoping soon to leave him for a comparative stranger, whose love, even when she should be assured of it, must of its very nature be jealous and exacting, unlike the quiet, unselfish affection which had guarded her from childhood? Was she worthy of it, when she wished to leave its sweet shelter now, when she was just beginning to supply her dead mother's place?

"Papa," she continued, after a pause, "if I am to go to Nethercotes I will not pay my promised visit to the convent before Christmas, you know. I would rather put it off until later, when Rupert has been—some time before Lent. I want to stay with you *quite* until I go to Nethercotes, papa; not to go anywhere without you, even for a day." And the almost sad kind of clinging tenderness was in Gertry's manner again just then, making her father's heart fill with its new vague uneasiness.

But he laughed as he said cheerily: "Well, we must settle that with the nuns, Gertry. If they will wait, I shall be all the better off, you know. 'Sunbeam,' so you must write in good time to Sister Teresa to announce the disappointment."

So it was settled, quite settled now, that she was to go to Nethercotes, the dear, unselfish father being even wishful that she should go. Gertry sat up late that night by the window in her little sea-side bedroom, listening to the moan of the waves, picturing to herself what the meeting would be like at Nethercotes, the meeting again with Stanley Graham. "Would papa be so wishful for me to go if he knew what it may lead to? He would, I know, if he felt it was for my happiness, dear, dear papa, even if he had to give me up at once; but would he wish it if he knew what Stanley Graham is like, that he is a despiser of religion, though he has never openly scoffed at it since he knew I was a Catholic? Will he welcome an infidel as my husband, if it comes to that, though he may be a kind, indulgent one, letting me be unmoored in my religion, consenting to all I should have to ask, as he would do, of course, caring so little about it himself?"

But then suddenly there came up out of his hiding-place in her heart the old fear, the terrible, scarcely acknowledged fear, that it *must* be otherwise—that haughty Stanley Graham, despising faith himself, understanding its existence so little, might not tolerate its practice in his wife—might refuse to grant the concessions without which she could not take him for her husband. The fear came so sharp and strong this time that Gertry fell on her knees almost in bodily pain.

"O God, anything but that; do not ask that sacrifice from me! I cannot give him up if he loves me, my life, my *whole* happiness. If it be thy will, keep that trial from me; or let me die if I should be too weak to bear it!"

Then with a vigorous effort she drove away the terrible vision, and prayed on more quietly that she might never be led into sin by temptation, however strong; that the future might be made easy for her; that even the light of faith, whether through her poor means or not, might be vouchsafed to Stanley Graham.

"He was baptized in his infancy—I know that much—Julia told me," she said to herself, as she rose and began to undress. "If it was rightly done, he is a Christian, without knowing or caring about it; he has at least the grace of baptism, which may work some good for him some day." And cheered and consoled, she succeeded entirely in hiding that terrible fear away again out of sight and acknowledgment.

A few days before they left Beachdown Gertry had received a letter from Nethercotes from Lady Hunter, a chatty, affectionate letter, full of kind inquiries for herself, telling her that she and Sir Robert were looking forward to her promised visit.

him, so that he will not be able to get away at all under the promised three months. He asks after you, and desires to be very kindly remembered, and says I must tell you he is looking forward with great pleasure to meeting you at Nethercotes. So, dear, with so many looking out for you, you must not on any account dream of disappointing us. And with a few more affectionate words her ladyship concluded.

Gertry stood reading her letter close to the window, with her back to her father, so that he could not see the color that rose to her face, while her heart beat with the rapture called up by even that slight message from her heart's idol. She was very much relieved that her cousin said nothing more pointed or particular about Stanley Graham—nothing more, after all, that might have been said of any gentleman of whom Gertry had seen a good deal in London—because it would have looked strange and unkind to her father not to have read her cousin's letter to him. So turning round, as soon as she felt calm enough, she said with a smile, "Shall I read it to you papa? It is from Julia." And at once she read it through aloud, controlling herself with a strong effort when she came to the message from Stanley Graham, so as to read it, if possible, in as ordinary a tone as the rest. Perhaps she did not wholly succeed; perhaps the mention of herself and the message, slight as they were, aroused a vague, far-off idea of the truth in Mr. Manning's mind for the first time; but though he listened quietly, without remark, the cloud settled oftener on his brow from that hour, the anxiety was more constant and definite in his heart.

He concealed it from Gertry, wishing to spare her any additional pain to that she was already enduring; but one day, now that they were at home again, he opened his mind to Father Walsmsley and told him the fear that was troubling him.

"I don't know why I connect the change I fancy I see in her with this Mr. Graham, Father Walsmsley," he said. "I did not do so until that last letter from Lady Hunter, but something or other has made me do so ever since; perhaps because she speaks of him so little, though we know she saw him constantly in London. I would not for worlds she guessed that I suspect anything of the kind; and if I have given you her confidence, Father Walsmsley, I am content to know nothing until she chooses."

"She has told me nothing, Mr. Manning; given me no confidence," replied the priest rather sadly. "I may even tell you now that I have noticed she avoids me as much as possible, and has done so since her return. God grant she may not be in any trouble, poor child, and that we may prove to be mistaken. Mind, do not fear for an instant that there can be anything *wrong* or even anything *settled* of any kind; I trust I know Gertry too well to suspect her of having been led into any decided engagement that she would conceal from you; but if it will be any satisfaction to you, Mr. Manning, I will try to gain her confidence, or at least find that we are mistaken altogether."

Father Walsmsley was right: even Gertry herself was conscious that she must see that she almost avoided him, that she was no longer child-like and open with him, as of old. She had gone to confession a day or two after her return home, devoutly and sincerely, though scarcely so easily as ever, but that was all; she had spoken only of what was necessary, and had evidently shrunk from any further questioning from Father Walsmsley, kind and friendly as it was meant to be. It had been the same when she went again when she and her father returned home together from Beachdown; so that the good priest had resolved to leave her to herself for a time and to make no further efforts to gain her confidence, but only to pray more earnestly than ever to our Lady to take care herself of her child and preserve her from harm.

But how that Mr. Manning had spoken to him, he brought himself to try once more to speak to Gertry, a day or two later, as he came into the church vestry, and found her there arranging flowers for the evening's Benediction. When they had talked a few minutes, he added very earnestly: "Gertry, there is nothing ails you, is there, my child? You are paler and quieter ever since you came home, and I am afraid sometimes there may be something, some little care or trouble, you have not liked to tell me—something you would like to ask me about, if you could open your mind. Am I mistaken, Gertry? Is it all my fancy?" And he smiled very kindly.

Gertry bent for a minute or two over her flowers, but not so as to hide her deep blush from so old a friend, and during that brief minute a painful struggle went on in her heart. *Could* she tell all to Father Walsmsley; ought she to do so, perhaps; would it not be easy after this kind invitation? Oh, no, no! not yet; she could not speak of her love while still it was unasked, while yet no open promise existed between her and its object. Was there, too, a fear in her mind as to what Father Walsmsley might say if he heard what manner of man it was to whom she had given her heart (and she must tell *all* or nothing)? Was there a vague fear that he might even advise her not to go to Nethercotes, as she had

promised—not yet at least? And this she knew she could not consent to—break her promise, given almost solemnly to Stanley Graham in that parting minute—given to him whose affianced wife she *might* have been now but for that journey abroad which he could not escape.

"Would it not look like coquetting with him to stay away without some good reason? No, no, I cannot tell even Father Walsmsley yet; even poor papa will have to wonder on a little longer, if he *does* wonder." And, stifling a sigh, she said aloud, but still bending over her flowers: "There is nothing, indeed, Father Walsmsley, that I want to tell you, at least—that I can tell you yet. You don't think I would keep anything *wrong* from you, Father Walsmsley?" And the painful color rose again.

"No, no, my child, nothing *wrong*; how could I? Don't I know you better than that, Gertry? Well, if there is nothing you wish to say to me, I ask no more, of course; but you know where you have a friend if ever you want one, my child. May God bless you and take care of you always!" And he was leaving her, convinced now that Gertry had a secret from him and her father, something they must not seek yet for her to tell them.

"O Father Walsmsley! don't think me ungrateful—*don't*, whatever you do, whatever I may seem just now!" And she went after him with the tears in her eyes.

"I never shall, Gertry; I promise always to trust you, the descendant of martyrs and confessors, you know, my child." And with a world of kind counsel hidden under the smiling words, he left her; and when he next saw her father, he told him that he was afraid there was some hidden care, some secret in Gertry's heart, but that they must not seek yet to know it; that they must trust her to God and her disposition to respond to his helping grace; that they must grow accustomed to the painful knowledge, if need be, that the bright, careless child who had left them had come back a woman.

And a day or two after that interview with Father Walsmsley, Gertry wrote to the convent, to her dear Sister Teresa, to announce the postponement of her promised visit.

"I shall be sure to come to you some time, sister, when I come back from Nethercotes, and when Rupert has been to see us, even if I have to come in Lent. I am so sorry I shall have to be so long without seeing you; but you understand how it is, that I don't like to leave papa, even for a day, before I go to my cousin's. Will you promise to pray for me when I am there, sister, very, very hard? I may need your prayers very much, though I cannot yet tell you why—though I perhaps hardly know myself; at least they will do no harm to."

"Your ever-loving child,
GERTRY MARY MANNERING,
L'Enfant de Marie,"
TO BE CONTINUED

HIS WAY

"What relation is Elizabeth Finn to Agnes and Gertrude Murphy?" asked Ella Smith.
"Their sister," replied Ann Gordon.
"But Elizabeth calls Mr. Murphy, Uncle, and Mrs. Murphy, Aunt Helen," interrupted Ella.
"There is no relationship whatever," said Kate Morton. "Mrs. Murphy and Mrs. Finn had been friends since their school days; Elizabeth's father died during her infancy, and Mrs. Finn died when Elizabeth was twelve years. Mrs. Murphy thought she had four little girls of her own, then in the nursery, and Elizabeth to her heart and her home."
"And a fine home it is," remarked Ella.
"Yes, they have a beautiful place at Glenville," chimed in Anna. Glenville, where many wealthy families resided, was a suburb, beautifully situated on the river Sheldon, about fourteen miles from Seaforth, a town on the Canadian sea-coast. The closing exercises were just over in St. Mary's Convent in Seaforth and farewells could be heard on all sides.

"Is there any truth in this story about Europe?" asked Ella.
"Yes, it is quite true," responded Kate. "Mrs. Murphy has not been well during the past year. The doctor recommends a winter in Egypt. Mr. Murphy will take his wife and Elizabeth abroad in September. They will be absent for a year."
"Who will take care of the Murphy children?" inquired Anna.
"Agnes and Gertrude will return here to St. Mary's, in September, and bring the two younger children with them," answered Kate, who seemed to be well informed.

"I wish I had been born with a silver spoon in my mouth," cried Ella. "What a delightful year Elizabeth will have!"
"There she is now," exclaimed Anna, as a young girl came out on the veranda, where Mother St. Paul was saying good-bye to the departing pupils.
"Since you will not keep me, I must say good-bye to Reverend Mother," said Elizabeth in a low voice.

"A year hence, dear," replied the Mother Superior. "Go now to the chapel and say your 'Fiat.'"
The girl turned and re-entered the house. She was more disappointed than she cared to admit. She had

hoped to pass from the school to the Novitiate, but Mrs. Murphy had arranged otherwise, and the Mother Superior thought it best that Elizabeth should spend a year in the world before entering the cloister.

She knelt before the Tabernacle for some time asking for grace; then bowing her head, she whispered: "Not my will, but Thine be done, now and always, dear Lord."
Her disappointment vanished and peace filled her soul.
"God loves me and He knows what is best."

"Elizabeth," said Mrs. Murphy, "I wish you would go into Seaforth this afternoon and see if you can find a pretty trimming for these dresses."
"Certainly, Aunt Helen, I can take the 1.30 train and return by the five o'clock express."
Elizabeth had found Mrs. Murphy far from well, in fact much worse than she had realized while at school. As Elizabeth seated herself in the train that afternoon, two men took the seat just behind her. They were in earnest conversation.

"If it goes," said one, "it will bring ruin to hundreds of families."
"It seemed so safe, such an splendid investment," exclaimed the other. "But there is no doubt now; the crash must come."
"My God!" cried the first speaker. "Most of the large firms will close their doors; factories will be obliged to shut down. There will be a time of general depression; some of our best men will be ruined."
"Well," replied his friend, "The Great Safety Trust Co. must fail and we are on the verge of the catastrophe. It will be twenty years before Seaforth recovers from the blow."

Elizabeth knew that Mr. Murphy had money with the Trust. That evening she followed him into the garden, and told him what she had heard. It seemed a relief to him that she knew.
"In a day or two all the world will know," he exclaimed.
"Are you deeply involved Uncle?" she asked.

"Every cent I own is in it," he answered, grimly.
"How far will it affect Aunt Helen and the children? Tell me the worst, Uncle," she pleaded.
He hesitated a moment, then said sadly: "We shall be beggars. The home, the furniture, everything," he concluded, "except honor must go."
"Will you tell Aunt Helen?" she asked.

"I shall tell her before I go to the city tomorrow," he replied.
Mrs. Murphy rose to the occasion; her faith and submission to God's will were beautiful; she cheered and encouraged her husband.

"We have each other and we have the children, even if poverty comes."
Half the burden seemed lifted from Mr. Murphy's shoulders as he went forth to meet the calamity.
The burden fell upon Elizabeth; it was she who went to the city with Mr. Murphy to find rooms. It was not an easy matter. She wanted a respectable locality, six rooms at least, and a moderate rent; this last was the great obstacle. When found, it was Elizabeth who selected from the furnishings of the old home the bare necessities for their new abode and arranged the latter; and when the family had moved in, it was she who returned to dismantle the old home, and see their cherished possessions pass into the hands of strangers.

Mr. Murphy walked the streets every day for weeks vainly seeking employment. Hundreds of others were in the same position, and each day brought fresh tidings of new failures. At last a friend made an opening for Mr. Murphy which was gratefully accepted, though the salary was very small.

"I have no need to go to church to hear a sermon," said Mrs. Reilly, as she sat talking with the Mother Superior in the convent. "I have a sermon at home every day."
"How is that?" inquired the Religious.
"I have only to visit the Murphy family. I never saw such Christian resignation and such conformity to God's will. I have never heard a complaint. Mrs. Murphy is a great sufferer, her days are numbered, yet she is sweet and patient; Mr. Murphy's heart is wrung with anguish at the sight of his wife's condition and his helplessness to aid her. The children are so good trying in every way to be useful."

"What of Elizabeth?" asked Reverend Mother.
Mrs. Reilly's eyes filled with tears.
"She is heroic; she is cook, nurse, maid of all work, seamstress, general drudge, worn out with hard labor, and bearing all the anxiety. Do you know, Reverend Mother, that she does the washing, the ironing, the mending and making, and now she is often up at night with Mrs. Murphy."
"How can she work all day and remain up at night?" asked Reverend Mother.
"Some of us go in after lunch," applied Mrs. Reilly, "and send Elizabeth to take a nap."
A few weeks later Elizabeth herself sat in the parlor with Mother St. Paul. Mrs. Murphy had been laid at rest.

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